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Senator Fonfara, Representative Berger and esteemed Members of the Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee:

I am writing this letter to discourage the sweep of funds in section 29 of Senate Bill 946 and House Bill 6824. We recognize the strain placed statewide by the budget deficit, but feel as though funds allocated to the Community Investment Act are of critical importance to agriculture in the state of Connecticut.

While the nursery/greenhouse industry that I represent does not qualify for many of the programs in the Community Investment Act, I can attest that there is huge value in the Ag Viability Grant Program and the Farm Transition Program. Both are critical for updating infrastructure and procedures to help both private and municipal farms maintain and expand their agricultural census and balance their respective budgets. This all translates into tangible gains that can be easily quantified to the “consumer”, the Connecticut taxpayer.

The Connecticut Farm Link Program is a valuable linking service to those trying to get started in Ag. Given the minimal amount of state funding required to run this program, there is an excellent return on this particular funding.

There is no question that open space in an increasingly populated state is critical for environmental as well as aesthetic concerns. CT DEEP has been very open to working with agriculture lately, and I feel that we can work well together to make productive use of such space for farming as well as wildlife habitat as time goes on. For those reasons, I suggest maintaining funds for the DEEP Municipal Open Space Grants.

I can only begin to grasp the enormity of the task of balancing the budget and providing a surplus for the General Fund. I thank you for your efforts in that venture, and for your time and consideration by reading this letter.

Regards,

Darryl Newman
President, Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association
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